# FOREWORD

BY

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Last summer Mr. Harold K. Hales, Member of Parliament for Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, 1931–1935, set out on a journey to India and the Far East. It was a business trip necessitating stops of varying duration at important commercial centres including Baghdad, Karachi, Calcutta, Rangoon, Singapore and visiting the islands of Java and Sumatra in the Dutch East India. As can well be understood, a journey involving about twenty thousand miles of travel is not one which a very busy man would undertake without considering most carefully whether he could reasonably spare the time. The fact that Mr. Hales was able to carry out the whole of his ambitious itinerary, staying sometimes as long as a week for the transaction of business in certain Eastern cities, all within the short span of a normal summer vacation, is due to his wise decision to make use of the facilities offered by the regular commercial air services.

How wise this decision was will be clearly shown to the reader of the pages which follow. They contain details and vivid descriptions of aerial travel, as it appeals to the ordinary non-technical passenger, over a variety of types of country in widely different conditions of climate. They also give useful hints that every air traveller should study.

Mr. Hales embarked upon his journey in a spirit of high adventure. His enthusiasm, his keen observation of detail, his almost youthful vitality of description, do not forsake him from start to finish. At a time when the gospel of air-mindedness must be preached to young and old if we are (as a nation and an Empire) to keep in the forefront of commerce and progress generally, the record which Mr. Hales has made can be read with advantage. Air-mindedness is growing rapidly, especially in the less developed parts of the Empire where other means of transport are deficient—but the advance of the commercial air-ways in speed, comfort, in ground organization, reliability, and safety, is even more rapid. I have myself flown over the same route as Mr. Hales somewhat more recently—a year later to be exact—and I am able to testify to the improvements that had taken place, even in that brief space of time.

The aerodromes used by Imperial Airways all along the route from London to Singapore are undergoing rapid transformation, especially as they have now been rendered more important by the completion of the Australian service. Good hangarage for every class of machine, night landing equipment, drainage to cope with the torrential rains of the monsoons, improved surfaces and general layout, the provisions of runways, and better hotel accommodation are all receiving attention at the various airports. Karachi, for instance, the gateway to India for aircraft, has already a splendid aerodrome well equipped with sheds and night landing lights, but the Indian Government have made available a considerable amount of money for its further improvement. The next stopping place to Karachi, Jodhpur, is a finely equipped aerodrome, the

private property of that most air-minded potentate, the Maharajah of Jodhpur. India is an ideal country for flying, and apart from the trunk line aerodromes many landing grounds have been or are being laid down in the various native States.

At Calcutta, progress is being made with a new aerodrome to the south and nearer to the centre of the city. At Singapore a new aerodrome is being provided with facilities both for aeroplanes and flying boats—and, what is important, it will be no more than five minutes from the centre of Singapore. The bringing of aerodromes nearer to the heart of the cities they serve is a matter that must not be overlooked in the future. Just as centres of population have greatly benefited in the past by their close proximity to maritime docks and by the fact that railway junctions are within their confines, so it is essential that, in the future, the facilities of aerodromes shall be within easy reach.

Those who, like Mr. Hales, are discovering the usefulness and unique advantages of air travel, are doing well in publishing their experiences, for they are pioneers of the new order.